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ABSTRACT

Both museums and public libraries are available sources of education for adults. Besides their traditional functions of collecting and preserving items from human artistic or scientific history, museums have taken on a more active role in educating the public, particularly adults. Some educational services provided by museums are dioramas, period rooms, orientations, tours, participatory experiences, publications, and lectures and seminars. Some museums take their programs to the public through approaches such as a "museum without walls" or an acting out of cultural events. Because of the increasing role being played by museums in the education of adults, more professional museum staff are being trained in adult education programs. Libraries have long been a focus of self-directed, lifelong learning for adults. They provide reference services, reading material, video material, discussion groups, and specialized services for various publics. Libraries are becoming increasingly community oriented, taking their services out to those who need them. They are primary educational resources to adults in the community and provide the basic services to aid citizens to become knowledgeable voters and to guard their intellectual freedom. (KC)

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ADULT EDUCATION IN MUSEUMS AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES

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ADULT EDUCATION IN MUSEUMS
AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Museums - An Introduction

Museums are facilities which house objects of cultural and scientific significance for study and education for the benefit of society. Museums are of Greek origin and were once dedicated to the mythological goddesses who ruled over the arts and sciences. Ordinarily, museums are nonprofit institutions with professional staff which are operated and financed by cities, states, regions, private foundations and universities. Museums acquire, conserve and exhibit holdings reflective of nature and man and are thus a means to systematically convey information.

A primary purpose of museums is to provide people with further insight into their heritage through the collection and preservation of objects. The preservation of cultural heritage is a uniquely human activity and as such its identification and interpretation is an essential part of the reasoning process of one's humanity. Museums are comprised of systematic exhibitions of the common and the unique of the human experience. They are catalysts for introducing new realms of thought and for motivating people to seek further knowledge and understanding.

Generally, museums are characterized by the kind of objects or items they identify and exhibit. That is, subject determines the type of museum and its function. Museums are generally identified with the fields of art, history or science, or combinations thereof. History museums, in addition

to conventional museums, include historic sites and villages. Art museums have several different areas of emphasis, such as historical periods, styles, artists, and mediums. History and art museums frequently exhibit traveling collections they obtain by exchange or rental to enhance their mission and purpose. Natural history museums, science technology museums, aquariums, planetariums and botanical gardens are common forms of science museums. There are various other types of museums which are concerned with natural, typical, and quantity-produced objects which represent some of the common characteristics of specific human cultures.

The development of hands-on, experienced-oriented rather than object-oriented museums, is a growing concept in museum development today. With emphasis on direct experience learning, such museums include a broad range of subject matter and focus on common, contemporary experiences such as touching artifacts, trying experiments, using computers, operating a coal mine, and measuring your pulse rate. The intent is to design exhibits in such a way that people can participate in the dynamics of a given situation rather than merely observe.

Depending upon their size, collections, and purposes, museums may have exhibit halls, auditoriums, classrooms, laboratories, libraries, studios, gardens, gift shops, cafeterias, nature trails, planetariums, aquariums, and media production facilities. Professionally trained staff are employed to design, operate and implement the museum's educational functions and programs.

Functions of Museums

Museums are important institutions of human heritage. They provide people with a sense of cultural identity, expecially with their own past as well as with the past of others. By providing standards of beauty and achievement, museums offer insights into the possibilities of one's own future. They help visitors to see themselves in a historical and cultural

perspective. By doing so, museums provide cultural appreciation and measurement of cultural acknowledgment.

In order to carry out their role of providing aesthetic and emotional experiences, museums typically perform five functions. One of the traditional functions of museums is the search for, acquisition, and collection of objects, materials, and artifacts in accordance with an established rationale and plan. This is frequently referred to as "the heart of a museum." A second function closely associated with collection is that of preservation and conservation. Proper treatment and care is important to protect the quality and utility of collections. Of equal importance is the museum's reserach function. Research, in a sense, is an extension of the acquisition and collection process. Works of art, historical objects and scientific specimens and equipment are researched in order to determine authenticity and to be appropriately cataloged. Collections are also researched and when new insight and knowledge result, information is shared with scholars in the profession. The art and science of exhibition is an important function of museums today. As the variety of types of museums expands, new technical skills are needed to exhibit collections in a manner conducive to enjoyment and study. Such skills not only require construction and design capabilities, but also a knowledge of the meaning and importance of that which is being exhibited. As more private collections are opened to the public and as a greater number of public museums are developed, the exhibition function is becoming an increasingly important factor in the success of a museum. The final function of museums is education, frequently referred to as interpretation. The interpretive function is the means whereby exhibitions are used to bring about a better understanding and appreciation of life. It is exposure and conveyance of culture to the general public. Some of the more common instructional practices include lectures, concerts,

films, publications, discussion groups, audio programs, and tours. Museums are cultural centers and social instruments which provide a form of adult education which is unique in society.

Museums and Adult Learning

Open and universal learning through the accumulation and dissemination of information is one of the unique characteristics of American society. Providing learning experiences and opportunities is a museum function. Museums are no longer perceived as merely depositories for rate objects and artifacts, but are public education resources by virtue of their selection, preservation, organization, and explanation of a variety of objects, specimens, and samples which have educational and cultural value.

A museum's education function includes all of the ways in which it communicates with society. This includes all services designed to enable it to interact with the public. Imparting of information, arousing curiosity, and encouraging questions are ways in which learning is accomplished. Museums provide visitors opportunities to look, explore, and investigate.

Most museums frequently refer to their educational activities and programs as interpretation rather than education. The term interpretation is considered appropriate in that learning is informal, recreational, voluntary, experiential, and perceptual. It is, however, organized learning in that experiences are designed so that visitors can gain new knowledge, attitudes and skills in a systematic fashion. On the other hand, the term education is considered less appropriate in that it infers the use of classrooms, grades, credits, curriculum, systematic sequence of courses, lessons arranged to specific time offerings and examinations. The interpretation function is basic to the instructional process of a museum. It is the communication link between a museum and the public.

Interpretation, as used to denote the learning experience provided by a museum staff, emphasizes learning through objects whether or not they are animate or inanimate, natural or man made. Through the use of sensory learning (sight, taste, touch and kinetic muscle sense), museums provide systematic programs based on their collections, usually focusing on certain themes, meanings, truths, and commonalities. Museum staff strive to design and present exhibits in the most appropriate fashion. Generally, the learning experience is informal and voluntary. Its success depends on the visitors interest and level of sophistication.

A variety of teaching methods are used by museums depending on their type and size. The goal of museums is, through interpretation, to affect a change in the attitudes, knowledge, and skills of their visitors. Museum staff design and implement interpretive experiences to enable visitors to gain new insights. Organizing exhibits to provide for effective learning is an especially essential means by which museums achieve their educational goals. Museums typically use some or all of the following teaching methods.

1. Dioramas - many museums use dioramas as an exhibit medium. Dioramas are miniature models that portray a scene (historical or contemporary) in three dimensional detail. Frequently, a sequence or series of dioramas are used to present a theme, event, or situation.
2. Period Rooms - a period room consists of objects and furnishing representative of a particular period of time. When possible, authentic objects are displayed for visitors.
3. Orientations - museums that have a large variety of exhibits and collections generally provide an opportunity for visitors to become acquainted with their offerings through a general overview presentation. The intent is to provide a better

understanding of the major themes or concepts of collections and the manner in which exhibits are arranged and presented. As a result of such orientations, museum visitors, hopefully, are able to select and focus more directly on that which is of interest to them. Orientations are presented in group sessions and frequently make use of audiovisual presentations.

4. Tours - gallery tours are one of the most common instructional techniques used by museums. A self-guided tour is one in which visitors walk through the museum on their own and view exhibits. Guidebooks, printed sheets, tape recorders, and visitor-activated audiovisual or multimedia devices are often used to describe and interpret objects in the museum. The guided tour is another tour form. However, it is more expensive to maintain than the self-guided tour. Museum guides can provide a more direct learning experience for visitors by directing their attention and responding to questions. Professional and volunteer guides are both widely used. Walking tours through theme parks, historic cities and nature parks are also common. Such tours can emphasize the viewing of demonstrations such as the practice of crafts and industrial operations.
5. Participatory Experiences - many museums are developing exhibits around the participation of visitors in some aspect of the exhibit. This learning form includes the handling of objects and participation in short term activities and was initially used in science and technology museums. The underlying concept of such exhibits is that visitors can learn more effectively through an experience in which they are an active participant.

Such participation takes a variety of forms including the handling of artifacts, trying an experiment, operating a model, experiencing a phenomenon, and using an instrument or system. It is a hands-on, get involved approach, rather than an object viewing oriented approach. The environment of outdoor museums is especially conducive to providing demonstrations and participatory activities.

6. Publications - books, periodicals, brochures, programs, newsletters and pamphlets are also means of museum education. They have an added dimension in that they may be kept and used for future reference or passed along to potential museum visitors. In some instances, annual reports, magazines and yearbooks are published by museums. Exhibit catalogues are often prepared for special exhibition programs. Publications provide staff opportunities to report research and write about exhibits and collections.
7. Lectures, Forums, and Seminars - museums frequently use special group presentations to present indepth aspects of exhibits. Such presentations tend to be specialized and scholarly in nature. Audiences tend to be composed of museum patrons who regularly attend and support the museum and its work.

Several innovative museums are taking their programs and services to the public. Through a "Museum without walls" approach, the museum is able to influence a greater number and a greater variety of people. It is recognized that a museum's program can benefit a variety of people, but that only a small number of potential museum goers are likely to visit a museum. In a pioneering effort, exhibits, programs, and activities are being provided by museum staff at shopping malls, municipal buildings and

special institutions. The museum clientele attracted is more diverse since an even greater variety of people are able to participate in a museum's program. Frequently, these mini-museum efforts are used to provide a preview of expanded activities that are provided at the museum's primary location. While such programs are typically designed for adults, the museum's overall emphasis is on educating the entire family.

Another interesting aspect of a museum is where actors, using scripts, act out historical or cultural events. The unique feature of these scenes is that they are performed in a manner similar to "street theaters" without having a specific designated area. Visitors encounter the presentations in the "middle of the road" as they pass through the museum.

Today's museums no longer merely consist of collections, but are cultural centers with a teaching commitment to the people in the communities within which they exist. They have theaters, movies, promotional staff, performing arts programs, cafeterias, study groups, gift shops, and television and radio shows. Many state museums sponsor "museumobiles" and traveling concerts, plays, and lectures. Museums are an integral part of our cultural heritage and learning environment.

Conclusion - Museums

With increased museums popularity, they are becoming a learning resource throughout a person's life. Museums are providing an ever-increasing role in society and in the learning of opportunities of ordinary people. The learning potential and services of museums to adults is substantial. Most of museums learning programs are designed with the adults in mind either as participants or as cultural value worthwhile for their children.

The background, motivation, and life-circumstances of adults are a rich resource for directing interest in the unique and the common of man's past and present. The sense of cultural continuity and understanding are needs which adults seek to fulfill. The "seeing" and "experiencing" through contemplation are typical characteristics associated with adulthood. The desire to understand and to rationalize one's plane in a cultural and historical perspective are often viewed by adults as an important museum function.

The various life passages experienced by adults certainly interacts and highlights museum learning opportunities. Being a voluntary learning experience, visitors accept museum programs on their own terms. Learning is selective based on needs and experience. Museum programs are different depending on the differences of the adults visiting.

This is not to indicate that museums are not for children. In fact, a growing number of museums are specifically designed for children through the designing of special programs, exhibits and courses. It is the adult population, however, that tends to seek out the benefits of a museum program on a voluntary basis, with some general or specific purpose in mind, and in terms of the time available to them. Continued learning through participation in community museum associations, specialized enrichment courses, and membership in museum clubs are an extension of the museum's learning program for adults.

In another sense, the importance of museum's learning efforts is reflected in the growing number of professional staff being trained for museum work. Training programs through workshops and conferences and academic courses are now being offered in exhibit techniques, museum methods, visual instruction, and administrative functions. Museum staff members are becoming more professional and career oriented and their training is a developing aspect of the adult education movement.

Public Libraries - An Introduction

Although there are over 14,000 community public libraries in the United States, it is impossible to describe them by an inclusive definition. They range in size from the New York Public Library with its reference collection of over five million volumes and circulation stock of over three million volumes to one-room village libraries with only a few hundred volumes that are open to users no more than a few hours a week. Public libraries are no longer merely depositories for books, but provide a broad range of information and support services through a variety of communication modes. If a library is considered public, by implication it is an institution established and maintained by the community which serves all in the community with free and equal access. Public libraries are maintained through local tax revenues. There are no admission requirements for their use. In a limited sense, libraries may be considered simply as information centers that provide reading, listening, and viewing materials which can be used for self-enhancement. In reality, they are the "People's University."

There are different types of libraries which serve different functions. National libraries serve the nation as a whole and are financed and operated by state and national governments. University, college and school libraries serve the educational purposes of their respective academic institutions. Special libraries cater to the needs of special readers including libraries of governmental departments, research associations, hospitals, churches, and professional organizations. Of all types of libraries, the public library is the most pervasive and touches almost every community.

Rationale for Public Libraries

Education whether formal or informal is recognized and held as a major objective of public libraries. Such an emphasis obviously arises from the close relationship existing between public libraries and the society within

which it functions. Being social institutions, public libraries foster those ideals which have gained widespread acceptance by society. They play an important educational role in the society today.

The very essence of democracy necessitates free and open access to information as a means to increase knowledgeable participation in society. The belief in the right of people to govern themselves is a cornerstone of the democratic faith. This assumes that people approach their participation in the democratic process on a rationale basis and that they will make the necessary effort to become well informed about the issues confronting their society. Public libraries are one means for intellectual freedom and the right for information and to form individual beliefs. As societal issues become more complex, the need for a more informed citizenry becomes necessary.

Public libraries are a part of society and its purposes and functions. As a reflection of and as a vehicle for society's needs, any information is a potential library holding. It is the only societal institution directed by their respective communities to collect and make available information. The direction of public libraries in any specific period of time is related to the climate and issues of patrons in a community. This remains a basic function from their early conception to today. It is through the exploration of ideas, options, and concerns as expressed by others that public libraries offer potential solutions and alternatives to individual and group needs in a community. Public libraries are a primary institution in a free and open society.

The need for the adult citizenry to make decisions and to seek options is a basic function of public libraries. Freedom of speech and assemblage assures people their right to participate in making decisions which affect their own welfare as well as that of their fellow citizens. The continuous efforts of people to improve themselves and their society through informed

decisions are a salient force in bettering moral and material ways of life. It is a cherished belief that adults are capable of establishing their own goals in a rational manner. Public libraries are the source and means for this decision making process. No other societal institution is available for such access for information giving.

It is the purpose of public libraries to provide people with information that meets their needs and to allow them to learn at their own rate for their own purpose. As such, self-education, whether problem solving or recreation, is a major function and an unrivaled one. Of all the features that characterize public libraries, the opportunity for individuals to design their own learning experiences according to their own level of satisfaction is a lifelong learning function. It is open entry and open exit for everyone who wishes to use its services.

The Public Library Association (PLA) of the American Library Association identifies give goals.

"1. The public library as a cultural agency.

2. The public library as an alternative educational agency.

3. The public library as a human service agency.

4. The public library as an information and referral agency.

5. The public library as a partner and coordinator of all library and information resources."[1]

Library Services

Effective public library services are responsive to the community. In general, these services are to serve individual and group needs based on their desire for information whether occupational, vocational, recreational, or self-realization. Traditionally, libraries are self-service community

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[1]Shirk, John. "Public Librarians Look at Community Education: What Is The Role." School Media Quarterly, Fall, 1978, pp. 19-24.

institutions through catalogs, indexes, references and information assistance services. As an information broker, it serves as an intermediary to adults and educational resources. The type and number of services vary according to the size, collection, and purpose of the library. Some services are user specific while others are basic to the operation of any library. More than ever, today's public library is facing the need of maintaining collections and existing services while at the same time taking the initiative in expanding library services especially among the nonuser groups.

A variety of facilities and services are offered to enhance public library access and use. An array of facility conveniences are offered including special reading rooms (e.g., quiet rooms, discussion rooms, record listening rooms), coffee and gift shops, exhibit and display sections, photocopying, book drops, branch libraries, bookmobiles, archives and document rooms, and special library hours. In terms of library services, a number of support services are offered for the library user. Examples of services provided include:

1. Suggesting materials and resources such as consumer information book lists and bibliographic indexes.
2. Assisting in information gathering and referrals.
3. Sponsoring radio and television reading and storytelling programs.
4. Offering special reading services to such groups as the elderly, emotionally and physically handicapped, incarcerated and parolees, the illiterate and the scholar.
5. Providing special materials such as wordless picture books, books in braille, large print books, cassette tapes, records, newspapers, foreign language books, music scores to borrow, and films.
6. Providing special user services such as inter-library loan, telephone information service, housebound reader assistance,

requested book purchases, tutorial assistance, and noon-hour programs.

7. Using readers' advisory committees, user assessments, and other community organizations for the enhancement of services.

The circulation and reference departments of a library are the two units under which most of the services are provided. The circulation department typically assists in using the card catalogs, issuing, receiving, and maintaining books and materials, and formulating library user policies and procedures. Reference functions are associate with giving information, maintaining topical files, administering an inter-library loan system, conducting formal classes on library usage, directing reading for pleasure programs for special purposes and in general the giving of personal assistance. Libraries are traditionally self-service institutions in which services and assistance is provided to enable users to help themselves.

Library facilities and services are designed to enhance use of library material and to satisfy the reading goals of its users. The extent to which such facilities and services are provided is dependent upon a community's commitment and financial support and the library leadership in taking initiative to develop programs. Libraries are unique institutions providing a vast array of facilities and services in which considerable formal and informal learning takes place.

Adult Services, Education and Libraries

Adult services and adult education are often used interchangeably based on the notion that services are a junction of learning. Adult services imply the availability and use of materials for particular goals or purposes for informal learning needs. For the most part, adults engage in a learning process to gain additional knowledge, skills, attitudes or behavioral capacities. The type of learning is characterized as self-directed, problem

or issue oriented, open entry and open exit, creative, self-improvement based and supportive of lifelong learning. It is undertaken for self-improvement and pursued within the individual's own learning capacities and setting. The library as a learning center definitely enhances self-education of adults. Libraries grow with the adult by meeting the adult's developmental needs.

The provision of library's adult services is frequently provided without any special identification and planning. The library's primary services typically involve the providing of materials, the extracting of information and the promoting and counseling in the use of materials. In this sense, adult services and adult education are differentiated from other types of library activities in terms of the librarian's relationship to the adult user.

An emerging emphasis among library programs is to emphasize services to special adult groups especially the disadvantaged such as the poor, elderly, incarcerated and illiterate in contrast to the generic adult population who are dealt with on one-to-one basis. The extent to which specialized group services are provided depends on the community's philosophy and on the library's policies to implement a philosophy. The dual role of providing learning resources for defined groups and providing a delivery system for a total community population based on majority demand can be in competition with each other. The concept of providing library services for particular groups indicates that communities with such identifiable groups need to carefully assess their services and key their services to the groups served.

Conclusion-Libraries

The public library is primarily a service resource to adults in the community. It assists other community based agencies and organizations in

numerous cultural activities. In communities where the public library is the only cultural institution, it is the sole transmitter of ideas. It is the information center for intellectual freedom, uncensored inquiry and the source for diverse opinions. Public libraries are the means to broaden one's horizons and the means for the lifelong learning for all adults.

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